

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BUDAPE 00970 250814Z
ACTION EUR-12

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, XH, HU, SOPN, US
SUBJECT: EVALUATION OF RFE BROADCASTS TO HUNGARY

REF: (A) 76 STATE 51717, (B) 76 BUDAPEST 3692,
(C) 76 BUDAPEST 1072

1. SUMMARY: WHILE CONSISTENTLY VALUING RFE BROADCASTS IN PAST, EMBASSY HAS BEEN CRITICAL IN VARYING DEGREES OF NEGATIVISM AND CARPING TONE OF SOME OF BRAODCASTS. OVER PAST SIX MONTHS, WITH POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF REPORTING ON GENERAL ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, WE FIND THIS FLAW HAS BEEN SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCED OR ELIMINATED. WE THEREFORE WISH TO ADD TO OUR CUSTOMARY PRAISE OF RFE FOR PROGRAMMING TAILORED TO HUNGARIAN AUDIENCE AND EXCELLENT COVERAGE OF WORLD AND EAST EUROPEAN EVENTS OUR APPRECIATION OF THE INCREASING BALANCE AND OBJECTIVITY IN RFE COMMENTARY. END SUMMARY.

2. EMBASSY WISHES TO DRAW ATTENTION TO ITS TWO IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING REPORTS ON RFE BROADCASTS TO HUNGARY. WE PERCEIVE NO CHANGE IN AUDIENCE REACTION TO RFE OR, ON TECHNICAL SIDE, GOOD RECEPTION OF RFE SIGNALS. RFE
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CONTINUES TO PROVIDE VARIED AND SOPHISTICATED PROGRAMS. EMBASSY DOES NOT INTEND TO REPEAT ITS PRAISE FOR RFE ON THIS SCORE HERE. WE WILL NOTE, HOWEVER, SOME AREAS WHERE RFE REPORTING HAS BEEN PARTICULARLY HELPFUL AND WELL SUITED TO ADVANCE OUR OBJECTIVES IN HUNGARY, NAMELY, WITH REGARD TO HUMAN RIGHTS, EUROCOMMUNISM, DEVELOPMENTS ON THE HUNGARIAN RELIGIOUS SCENE AND

MOST FAVORED NATION TREATMENT OF COMMUNIST COUNTRIES BY THE UNITED STATES. EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT RFE SHOULD BE COMMENDED ON THE TACT AND BALANCE WITH WHICH THESE HIGHLY SENSITIVE SUBJECTS HAVE BEEN REPORTED AND DISCUSSED. BROADCASTS CONCERNING THE LETTER FROM HUNGARIANS IN SUPPORT OF CHARTER 77 SIGNERS, THE VARIOUS SEGMENTS OF THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE HUNGARIAN CHURCH AND STATE, AND KADAR'S AND OTHER HUNGARIAN LEADERS' PRONOUNCEMENTS ON EUROCOMMUNISM WERE ALL VERY WELL DONE.

3. BASED ON REVIEWS OF RFE HUNGARIAN PROGRAM SUMMARIES AND SELECTED BROADCAST TRANSCRIPTS OVER THE LAST SIX MONTHS, RFE APPEARS TO HAVE ALMOST ELIMINATED THE NEGATIVE TONE WHICH USED TO SURFACE IN MANY OF ITS PROGRAMS AND NEWS REPORTS AND TO HAVE ACHIEVED A MUCH MORE OBJECTIVE TONE OF COMMUNICATION. CURRENT LEVEL OF OBJECTIVITY IS HIGH AND NOW MARRED ONLY IN SOME OF THE DISCUSSIONS OF GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT, GROWTH RATES AND INDUSTRIAL PERFORMANCE. EMBASSY CONTINUES TO BELIEVE IN THIS AREA AS WELL AS OTHERS UNVARNISHED FACTS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES AND DO NOT NEED TO BE ACCOMPANIED BY NEGATIVE JUDGMENTS AND DEPRECATORY ADJECTIVES. FOR ONE THING, A CONSIDERABLE NUMBER OF NON-SOCIALIST ECONOMIES ARE FARING AS BAD OR WORSE THAN THE HUNGARIAN ECONOMY. FOR ANOTHER, WE BELIEVE POINTS ON COMPARATIVE PERFORMANCE ARE BEST MADE IN BROADCASTS, SUCH AS THE EXCELLENT JANUARY 16 ONE ON "CRISIS OF CAPITALISM", IN WHICH THERE IS TIME TO DEVELOP AND EXPLAIN A SOPHISTICATED ARGUMENT GOING WELL BEYOND FAULT-FINDING AND BELITTling. YET, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THIS ONE CRITICISM EMBASSY OFFERING SHOULD NOT DETRACT FROM OUR BRIEFER BUT MORE WIDELY APPLICABLE REMARKS ABOVE ON THE MUCH IMPROVED OBJECTIVITY AND TONE OF RFE BROADCASTS TO HUNGARY.

4. IN CONCLUSION, EMBASSY WISHES STRESS ONCE MORE THAT RFE REMAINS IN CONSTANT COMPETITION WITH MEDIA SOURCES IN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES AND WITH RELATIVELY OBJECTIVE (I.E. VIS-A-VIS OTHER WP COUNTRIES) HUNGARIAN MEDIA. DESPITE ITS EXCELLENT PROGRAMMING STANDARDS, RFE AUDIENCE IS NOT SPECTACULARLY LARGE NOR DO RFE BROADCASTS HAVE WIDESPREAD DRAMATIC IMPACT. EXISTENCE OF RFE, HOWEVER, DOES GOAD GOH MEDIA TOWARDS GREATER OBJECTIVITY. IT FILLS IN IMPORTANT GAPS IN LISTENER KNOWLEDGE. IT IS BOTH EVIDENCE AND GUARANTOR OF THE FREER INFORMATION ATMOSPHERE WHICH IS A U.S. GOAL IN CSCE AND IN BROADER CONTEXT. EMBASSY BELIEVES CURRENT FINE STANDARD MUST BE MAINTAINED TO KEEP AUDIENCE ATTENTION AND FULLY APPRECIATES EFFORT ON PART OF RFE

HUNGARIAN STAFF TO REACH PRESENT HIGH LEVEL.
MUDD

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